



# FEMA

## Common Alerting Protocol Implementation (IPAWS)

### Fact Sheet

#### BACKGROUND

- The Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) allows emergency messages to be simultaneously disseminated over a wide variety of existing and emerging public alerting systems.
- CAP is an international technical data specification developed by the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS).
- In addition to the basic CAP standard, a supplemental IPAWS Profile technical specification was developed to ensure compatibility with existing warning systems used in the United States.
- FEMA has formally adopted CAP and the IPAWS Profile to implement the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System.

#### WHAT SYSTEMS WILL USE CAP?

- Emergency Alert System (EAS) participants (radio, television, cable, broadcast, satellite, and wireline providers) are required to upgrade their equipment to be capable of receiving CAP-formatted alerts under Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules. The current compliance deadline was June 30, 2012.
- Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) are transmitted to the IPAWS- Open Platform for Emergency Networks (OPEN) Aggregator in CAP format. The major cellular companies implemented the capability to broadcast presidential, imminent threat and AMBER alerts to cellular telephones in April 2012.

- The National Weather Service (NWS) uses a form of CAP to receive Non Weather Emergency Messages (NWEMs) from authorized public officials for relay over its family dissemination systems, including NOAA Weather Radio.
- NWS will also use CAP to relay NWS-originated warnings via IPAWS, in addition to its current methods.
- Additional public and private sector systems are expected to migrate to CAP over the coming years.

#### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CAP?

- As more systems are built or upgraded to CAP, a single alert can trigger a wide variety of public warning systems, increasing the likelihood that intended recipients receive the alert by one or more communication pathways.
- CAP provides the capability to include rich content, such as photographs, maps, streaming video and more.
- CAP provides the ability to geo-target alerts to a defined warning area, limited only by the capacity of the delivery system used.
- Although IPAWS does not provide translation services, CAP does provide the capability to issue alerts in multiple languages.
- Since CAP provides the capability to incorporate both text and equivalent audio, CAP alerts can better serve the needs of hearing or visually impaired persons.

For more information: <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/>  
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